

# Colonel Gale's Letter to His Wife Told of Severe Fighting Around Nashville

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boro Pike and in front of General Loring. Generals French and Walthall had their troops in bivouac along the east side of the Hillsboro Pike ready to move. I informed General Stewart, who mounted and rode to the point, leaving me to receive and open and send dispatches. I had a signal station and sent dispatches to Generals Hood, Lee and Cheatham, and received others.

In a short time the firing began and grew heavier as the enemy advanced. It was soon perceived that his main attack would be there, as his whole army appeared to be in front. They then stormed and took Redoubt 5, our forces being entirely too small to keep them back. The reinforcements sent to us did not arrive in time.

Walthall's troops stationed along the pike in front of these works, were then driven in and the enemy were then in the rear of Gen. Loring, which of course, compelled him to fall back, as did the whole of our line until dark. I remained in my office until the Yankees advanced to within three hundred yards. I then mounted and made my escape through the back yard with my clerks and joined Gen. Stewart in front of Mr. Platter's, where Gen. Sears lost his life very near me.

### All in Vain

As our men fell back before the advancing Yankees Mary Bradford ran out under heavy fire and did all she could to induce the men to stop and fight, appealing to them and begging them, but in vain — Deas brigade was here. Gen. Hood told me yesterday he intended to mention her courageous conduct in his report, which will immortalize her.

The men seemed utterly lethargic and without interest in battle. I never witnessed such want of enthusiasm, and began to fear for tomorrow, hoping that Gen. Hood would retreat during the night, cross Duck River, and then stop and fight; but he would not give up. However, he sent all his wagons to Franklin, which prepared the men still more for the stampede of the next day.

The enemy adapted their line to ours, and about 9 a.m. began the attack on Cheatham, trying all day to turn him and get behind the gap, and in crossing got in the rear of Gen. Stewart's headquarters, which were on the side of the knob looking towards Nashville. We could see the whole line in our front — every move attack and retreat. It was magnificent. What a grand sight it was! I could see the Capitol all day, and the churches.

The Yanks had three lines of battle everywhere I could see, and parks of artillery playing upon us and raining shot and shell for eight mortal hours. I could see nearly every piece in our front, even the gunners at work. They made several heavy assaults upon Gen. Lee's line near John Thompson's, and one in front of Mrs. Mullin's.

### Over in Clouds

At length having gained our rear, about 4 p.m. they made a vigorous assault upon the whole right line and left. Bate gave way, and they poured over in clouds behind Walthall, which, of course forced him to give way, and then by brigades the whole line from left to right. Lee held on bravely a while longer than the center and left.

Here was a scene which I shall not attempt to describe, for it is impossible to give you any idea of an army frightened and routed. Some brave effort was made to rally the men and make a stand, but all control over them was gone, and they flatly refused to stop, throwing down their guns, and indeed, everything that impeded their flight, and every man fled for himself.

Reynolds' brigade was ordered to go to the right just before the rout began, and got to where I was when I halted it and got the general to form it in line across the point of the knob just in the path of the flying mass, hoping to rally some men on this and save the rest by gaining time for all to come out of the valley. NOT A MAN WOULD STOP! The First Tennessee came by, and its colonel, House, was the only man who would stop with us, and finding none of his men willing to stand, he too went on his way.

As soon as I found all was lost, and the enemy closing in around us, I sent a courier to Gen. Stewart, who had gone to Gen. Hood's quarters in the rear of Lee's house, to inform him of the fact, that he might save himself. This courier was mortally wounded, and left at Franklin. Finding the enemy closing in around us, and all indeed gone, I ordered the couriers and clerks who were there to follow me, and we rode as fast as I could to where I thought Gen. Stewart and Gen. Hood were. They were gone, and in their places were the Yankees.

I turned my horse's head towards the steep knobs and spurred away. It was the only chance of escape left. The first place I struck the hill was too steep for any horse to climb, and I skirted along the hills hoping to find some place easier, of ascent, but none seemed to exist. Finally I reached a place not so steep, and in the midst of thousands of retreating soldiers I turned my horse's head for the ascent, resolved to try it. The bullets began to come thick and fast.

Now, I found my saddle nearly off, and was forced to get down, but on I went on foot. All along the poor, frightened fellows were crying out to me, "Let me hold on to your stirrup, for God's sake." "Give me your hand and help me, if you please." Some were wounded, and many exhausted and unable to move.

By this time the enemy had gotten to the foot of the hill and were firing at us freely. What was I to do? I twisted my hand in my horse's mane and was borne to the top of the hill by the noble animal, more dead than alive. I was safe, though, and so were my

men. We descended the southern slope and entered the deep valley whose shadows were darkened by approaching night. The woods were filled with retreating men.

I joined the crowd and finally made my way to the Franklin Pike, where I found Gen. Stewart who was much relieved, for I had been reported as certainly killed or captured. All night long we fled. The Harpeth was crossed and a few hours of rest al-

**Colonel William Dudley Gale was a prominent citizen of Nashville, for whom Gale Lane was named. His grandson, W. Dudley Gale III, a benefactor of the University of the South at Sewanee and president of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, died in Nashville last year.**

lowed, when we started on for Columbia, then Pulaski, and then Bainbridge, four miles above Florence. Every man was haunted by the apprehension that we did not have

boats enough to make a bridge.

On we marched, through ice and rain and snow, sleeping on the wet ground at night. Many thousands were barefooted, actually leaving the prints of blood upon the ground, as the enemy pressed us in the rear. When we left the pike at Pulaski we had an awful road, strewn with dead horses and mules broken wagons, and worse than all — broken pontoons. We counted,

as we passed them, one, two, three, to fifteen.

Thus we trailed on until, Christmas day, cold, drizzly and muddy we camped on the bank of Shoal Creek, and our corps formed line of battle to protect the rear and let us cross, if the bridge could be made. Roddy had captured the enemy's pontoons at Decatur, and they were floated down over the shoals. The bridge was made and the crossing began.

Then came the fight with the gun-boats, which tried to destroy our bridge. They were driven back and we crossed.

"All is well that ends well." Every wagon, ever cannon, every horse, every mule, the hogs, bees, cavalry, infantry, and finally every scout crossed over. The retreat continued to this place, and here we are, daily expecting orders. There were many things in this memorable campaign

never to be forgotten. I shall never forget the passage of Duck River — Washington crossing the Delaware was insignificant.

I wish I could send you something, my darling, but you know I have no means. I do not despair, but hope to send you and the little fellows a few things some of these days.

General Hood has been relieved, and Taylor is in command. What next?



the **1864**  
Army Doctor was  
proud of his medicine shelf....

if he was lucky enough to have one. Government channels were limited in what they could supply, and often had difficulty in supplying him with what they did have. The doctor had to depend greatly on his own ingenuity to obtain any medicines for his patients in many cases, or formulate his own if he was fortunate enough to have the ingredients. The fields of medicine and pharmacy were not geared to take on the human destruction created by the war, doctors were too few, medicines too scarce and ineffective. It has been estimated that if modern skills, facilities, and medicines had been used fatality would have been reduced by 75%!

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